THE GREAT DYNAMITE BOMB MYSTERY OF YONKERS.

A FAMOUS DETECTIVE STORY WRITER SOLVES THE PUZZLE OF HAMLIN J. ANDRUS'S TRAGIC FATE.

By the Author of "The Tenant of the Narrow House," "A Secret of the Heart," "Stamps for Reply," "The Way of the Transgressor," Etc., Etc., Etc.

Hamlin J. Andrus was instantly killed by the explosion of a bomb in his office in Yonkers, on the morning of Wednesday October 21. The conditions indicated murder of a type most abhorrent to the soul and revolting to the physical nature.

No arrest will ever be made in this case. That is the opinion of the police of Yonkers, and of the Pinkerton detectives employed to aid in clearing up the mystery. Thus is preshadowed the end of what may be called the practical side of the investigation of this tragedy, the evil fame of which has been cried around the world.

Is it possible to proceed further in theory? Problems seemingly far more obscure are presented in detective fiction, and are plausibly solved. Suppose the Andrus case to represent a "plot" partially worked out, what would be the end of the story? That is the question which the Journal has asked of Howard Fielding, an author whose stories are distinguished by the great difficulty of the criminal problems which they offer to the reader and the closeness of the reasoning by which the solutions are attained. Excuse for transferring this terrible tragedy to the reader of fiction is furnished by the present condition of the actual investigation, already mentioned.

The story deals with the evidence as it exists, and the characters are real, with the exception of the two detectives and a nameless person, who enters as the curtain is about to fall.—Editor.

I.

THE VISIBLE FACTS.

The work-day was beginning in the medicine factory, as Yonkers people call it. The men had arrived, and the "bosses" were arriving. Secretary Hamlin Andrus, of the Arlington Chemical Works, had just entered his office, and President F. W. R. Eschman, of the Palisade Manufacturing Company, was driving into the narrow yard that lies between Palisade avenue and the long, rambling structure.

Mr. Eschman drove his horse up to the fence nearly opposite the main entrance of the building and dismounted from his carriage. Suddenly he was aware of a shock, sharp and sudden like a blow; there was the sound of a rattling crash, as of shivered glass; and, in the midst of it, a dull but quick report. For an instant the ground quivered, and the red walls of the long building seemed to reel in the trembling air.

A murmur of excited voices grew ever louder in the medicine building. Windows were noisily raised. The main door was flung open, while Mr. Eschman was still struggling with his horse. A young man rushed out, wild with excitement, his face pale and contorted with horror.

"They have killed my father!" he cried, in a choking voice.

He was Hiram Andrus, son of the secretary of the Arlington Company. Mr. Eschman, facing him, could also include in his glance the western side of a small structure, one story in height, which adjoined the southern end of the factory. There was a window in the side toward him, or rather there had been, but at that moment it was a ragged hole in the wall, without glass or sash.

Upon the floor of the second room lay the body of Hamlin Andrus, a ghastly spectacle. Of the face little remained but the chin. The trunk was torn open.

Mr. Andrus had been alone when the explosion occurred. The room was rarely used by any one else. He had a desk by the western window—merely a slanting board, breast high, upon which he wrote as he sat on a tall stool. To the left of the desk was a big safe against the southern wall; to the right, a smaller safe. The larger safe was open at the time of the tragedy; the other, which was Hamlin Andrus's private safe, was locked.

Several fragments of the iron shell that had contained the explosive were found in the walls, in the floor and in the ceiling. Two small pieces were found in the heart of the dead man.

II.

Theories and Discoveries.

The wildest theories were at once afloat. It was an Anarchist plot; it was an act of revenge on the part of discharged employes; it was all a mistake, and John E. Andrus, the multi-millionaire brother of the victim, had been aimed at. The most unjust and baseless rumor struck at Hiram Andrus, only son of the man who had perished.

He was questioned by the police, and his story was soon told. He had left his house a minute or two later than his father that morning, but as he rode a bicycle and his father walked, Hiram had reached the office considerably ahead. In accordance with his daily custom he had opened the large safe and had put some books taken from it and some letters on his father's desk. Then he had gone to a distant part of the factory, leaving the office just as his father entered the building.

The most rigid questioning could not shake him in that simple story.

The first day's investigation was principally notable for the number of persons discovered who knew nothing about the crime.

One notable exception appeared, however, in the person of one Kiley, gasfitter and general utility man, employed in the factory. He asserted that on the Friday preceding the catastrophe Mr. Andrus had asked him for some pieces of gas pipe with caps to fit them. He had furnished the articles required later, and they answered very closely to the materials used in the construction of the bomb.

Kiley understood that Mr. Andrus wished to use the gas pipe for purposes of experiment. Mr. Andrus was an inventor of the "tinkering" type.

Coroner Miles, who had taken charge of the case, and to a certain extent had elbowed the police out of it, came across a couple of wires protruding from the wall of the wrecked office. They had been concealed by the desk when the desk had been there. These wires were traced to the cellar, where they ran the whole length of the factory building, connecting meanwhile with a battery of four cells—a Mesco dry battery—that was concealed in a closet. These wires could be brought together so as to complete a circuit, by means of an ingenious device not necessary to explain here, further than to say that it was not gotten up by an expert electrician, but by an ingenious person who knew the theory better than the practice. The essential point of the device was that it could be operated from a small, unused shed on the north end of the factory, the end furthest from Mr. Andrus's offices.

III.

The Visiting Detective.

There is an old fellow in New York who has given the best years of his life to the study of criminal mystery, and who comes nearer to being the detective of romance than does anybody else with whom the present writer is acquainted. He has a living income, and does very little work nowadays. Being an Irishman, as are all real detectives (the Parisians are bogus), he pronounces his first name in two syllables—Char-les Allen.

Mr. Allen called at the police station and examined the relics of the crime.

Having seen these things, he spent some hours asking questions of various persons in the city, and at last drifted over toward the scene of the crime. On Palisade avenue he ran upon a special detective—well known to him—who had been brought up from New York to aid the investigation and was working under the direction of Coroner Miles.

"Look here," said Allen, "I want to have a word with you."

"I'm expecting the Coroner here every minute," said Reagan, the "special."

"I'm also expecting somebody," replied Allen. "A young fellow who is working up a little point in explosives for me. Why haven't we had an inquest in this case?"

"The Coroner isn't ready. He has been delayed."

"Don't you know that this delay is an injustice?"

"To whom?"

"To Hamlin J. Andrus," said Allen, "and to those who cherish his memory."

"I don't think I quite follow you," said Reagan.

"This delay is making him out a suicide," Allen rejoined. "If you can't follow the evidence you can at least follow the newspapers. Now what's the evidence? Why, pending the inquest, Kiley's story, which is only vaguely explained by rumors about gas stoves or other queer things that Andrus wanted those pipes for—Kiley's story, I say, makes it in the highest degree probable that Andrus made the bomb that killed him."

"Some people think that he made it," said Reagan, "and that he killed himself with it accidentally."

Allen threw up his hands.

"That is childish," he cried. "They say he was experimenting with a burglar alarm that would have done more harm than any burglar could. Admit, for the sake of argument, that he was, would he have loaded it with a bursting charge? Absurd! He had no idea of testing its power. If he had, how was he going to do it. On those safes? Ridiculous! With instruments of measurement? Where are they? Where's anything to show that he intended to make any attempt to test the power of an explosion? You can't show it.

"Then a detonating charge—a mere fraction of what was actually used—would have served his test just as well. I leave to infants and imbeciles the theory that he loaded that bomb for the purpose of a test. He would have used a different explosive anyhow, and he would not have used all he had of it in one test."

"That's so," said Reagan. "He must have been murdered."

"By those wires in the cellar?" cried Allen. "Preposterous! How could the murderer at the other end of the factory have known where Andrus was when he pulled his string? Do you suppose he peeked in through the window, and, seeing Andrus in the right place, ran a hundred feet and pulled the string? What a risk! What a slim chance of success! Suppose Andrus had gone to the safe—the most natural thing in the world. Shielded by the iron door, his life would have been safe, and he would probably have suffered small injury. Even on the other side of the room his chances would have been a hundred times better than Russell Sage's or Leiter's, for the force of the explosion here is nothing to what it was there. No, no; it won't do. Those wires, for the reasons I have stated and a hundred others, had nothing to do with the explosion of the bomb. And cap all, there is the fact that the man had a thousand friends and no enemies; the further fact that no motive has been suggested."

"Do you yourself hold the suicide theory?" demanded Reagan.

"Why not? Isn't it far more reasonable than the accidental theory? Isn't it far more reasonable than that wire-murder theory, the like of which nobody ever heard of before? Did you ever see work more characteristic of individual than that wire trigger device was of Hamlin J. Andrus?" "But, my dear sir, the suicide theorists say that those wires were strung as a blind after Andrus's death."

"Not impossible, but improbable. It is much more likely that they were strung as a blind before his death, and by him. A murderer would have been content with a device in the bomb itself; a suicide must have one that will survive the explosion and clear his name, and make no trouble in the matter of insurance. Then, too, where was Andrus when the explosion took place? Under the desk. How do I know Because there are no blood stains on the top part of the desk, and no splinters of the desk were found in certain of his wounds, where they ought to have been had he been leaning on the desk when the bomb went off. He was under the desk. Why? It was the best place to escape accidental observation."

"But, on the other hand, we who have studied the man's character know that he didn't commit suicide. Yet some of us can't deny that he made the bomb."

"Then," said Reagan, "you hark back to the accident theory."

"No, sir," cried Allen, "to the murder theory. Admitting that Andrus made the bomb, we have no possible explanation of his loading it as he did. He never used explosives; he did not understand them. What would such a man naturally have done? Would he have risked his life by tampering with explosives? Not at all. He would have had somebody do that for him. He would have taken his bomb to some person whom he supposed to be skilled in such matters, and he would have said, 'Load me this with a charge that will test the method of firing, but will not explode the bomb.'"

"Allen, is this pure theory?" exclaimed Reagan.

"No," replied Allen, "it is fact, for I have found the man. It is he with whom I have an appointment here."

"By heavens! You don't mean ——?"

He whispered a name in Allen's ear.

The old detective nodded. Steps were heard in the hall. A young man entered the room. He saw before him Allen, who held a pair of handcuffs in his hand. The young man paled as he saw the handcuffs, and noted the expression on the faces of the two detectives. Then he threw back his head with a great effort at self-control and the next instant fell to the floor, overpowered by his own tremendous struggle with fear.

"I forgot to mention," said Allen, as he lifted the man up, "that this fellow met Mr. Andrus on his way to the office that morning and gave him the bomb. It was 'timed' and it went off just as Mr. Andrus was tying it up under his desk in a place which this fellow knew was prepared for it."

HOWARD FIELDING.